

Prehistoric Remains in Licking County, Ohio.



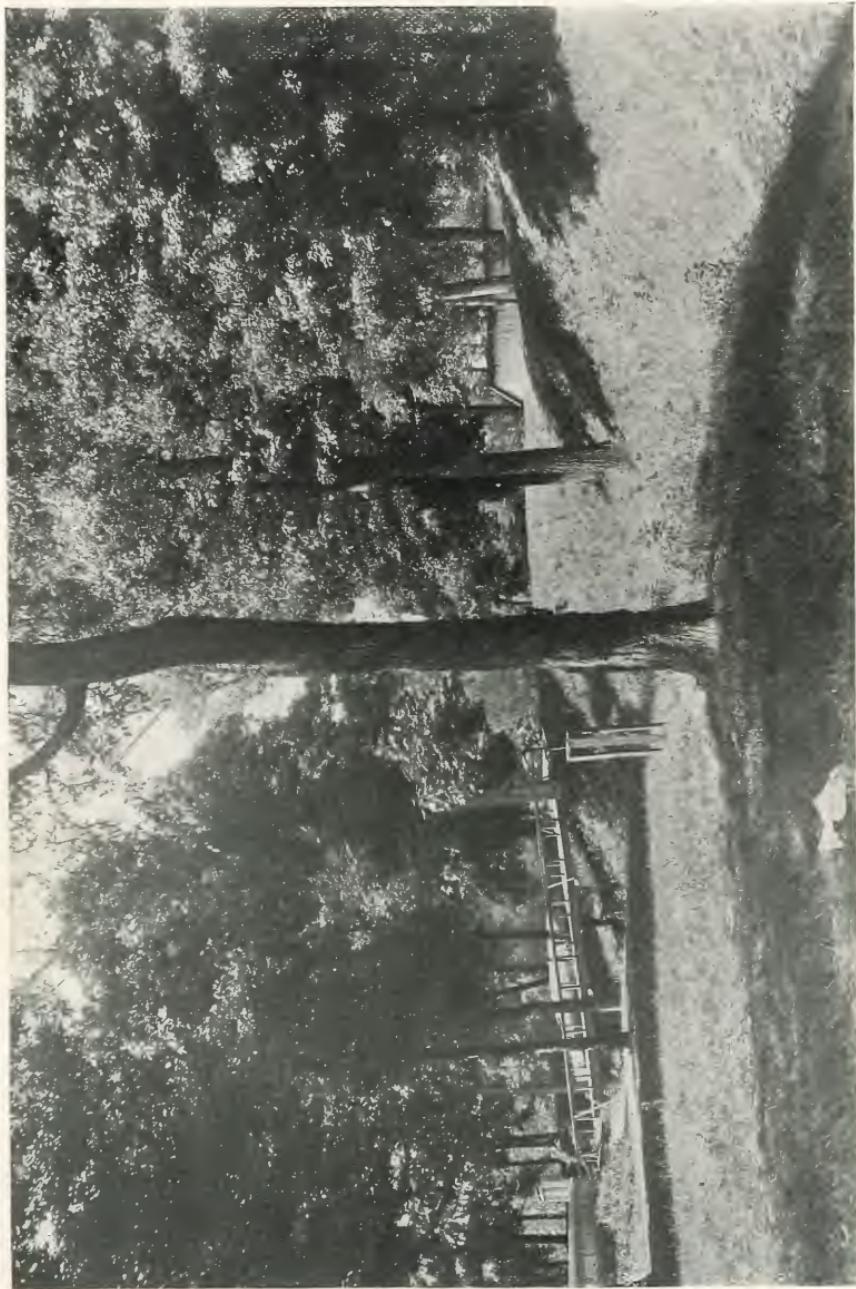


PREHISTORIC REMAINS IN LICKING
COUNTY, OHIO

By WALTER C. METZ
NEWARK, O.
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Old Fort at the Fair Grounds



ABORIGINAL REMAINS IN LICKING COUNTY, OHIO.

BY WALTER C. METZ

A person passing through the Country on almost any road in Licking County, can scarcely fail to be attracted by peculiar heaps of earth more or less conical in form, and varying in size from those which are scarcely noticeable to those a hundred feet in diameter and fifteen or twenty feet high. Some may appear at first sight as mere natural formations, but on a closer inspection show that they have been built by human hands. Whatever may have been the progeny of the race which constructed these mounds, they prove to be exceedingly interesting to Archaeologist and curio seeker.

Though far greater numbers of earthworks are found in Ross County, there is probably no one locality that presents so many varied forms of prehistoric works as does the country surrounding Newark.

The topography of the country was such as to attract a race of people whose needs were supplied by the fertile valleys drained by rather large streams, the hilltops clad in primeval forests, and the large deposit of flint at Flint Ridge, which furnished an abundance of material for their implements.

Of the works of small size, many have been wholly destroyed by the tilling of the soil through successive years, while a great many mounds have been partially destroyed by curious persons, who have dug aimlessly into them. An attempt to preserve all of the mounds and embankments would be useless, but for the sake of future generations the most interesting of them ought to be cared for.

BURIAL MOUNDS

Of the large number of earthen mounds, more or less symmetrical, that are scattered throughout the County on hilltops and in valleys, the material found in them resembles closely in a



Mound in Fermont Cemetery

general way the surface finds. Human remains are invariably found in them, often together with implements and ornaments. In a small mound two miles north of Newark, an elaborately carved effigy pipe, resembling the head of a wolf or dog, made of red sandstone, was found with several human skeletons and a number of copper-heads. A finely polished perforated ornament of Galenite was unearthed in a mound just east of Newark, and on removing a small mound in the western portion of the city, two copper pieces were found near a human skeleton, one a spool shaped ornament, the other a piece of sheet copper with a single perforation near one corner.

The accompanying photograph shows a num-



Stone Pieces found in the Marlowe Mound

ber of implements found in the Marlowe mound near the Raccoon Creek, one-half mile east of Granville. It was sixty-two feet in diameter from east to west and fifty from north to south, with a height of five feet. It had probably been reduced considerably, as it was situated near the center of a well-cultivated field. The upper portion for a depth of two feet was mostly sand, while the portion below was of a sandy loam more or less mixed with gravel. In one portion, one and one-half feet below the surface, was a strip of decayed vegetable matter, one inch thick. Small pieces of charred wood were scattered throughout the mound, and in one place was quite a quantity of a red ochre, which was no doubt used for paint.

Hundreds of small light-colored flint chips seemed to indicate that implements were being made while the mound was in the process of construction. Just west of the center a little below the surface there was a large quantity of charred wood. One and one-half feet below this was a layer of clay, four inches thick, tinted red by the action of heat. Embedded in this clay was a small portion of a human skull, together with five stone implements, a light-colored flint flake, two inches long, used for cutting purposes, a small granite hammer stone, a sandstone cone, two inches in diameter, a small granite celt and a portion of a crinoid stem, one and one-half inches long and one-half inch in diameter, probably used for a bead.

The other implements showed all grades of workmanship, and were scattered promiscuously through the mound.

A highly polished grooved quartzite axe, five and one-fourth inches in length, was of such a form as to indicate that it was used exclusively for ceremonial purposes. A single slate piece was found, that being a broken perforated ornament, three and one-fourth inches in length. Six arrowheads of a dark colored flint, ranging in length from two and one-half to three and three-



Warner Mound on Buena Vista Street

eighths inches, were of only ordinary workmanship, while the lower portion of a spearhead, three and three-fourths inches long and three inches wide, showed extraordinary skill in flaking. A roughly chipped drill, or perforator, was made from a weathered piece of material. The human skeletons were too badly decayed to be preserved.

On the summit of a ridge just east of Buena Vista street, within the eastern limits of Newark, stood the Warner mound, sixty-two feet in diameter from east to west, and seventy-nine from north to south, with a height of about nine feet. A twelve-foot alley was cut through the mound from east to west, and in excavating over three hundred loads of earth were removed. Por-



Warner Mound after Alley was cut through



Implements and Ornaments taken from the Warner Mound

tions near the bottom showed action of heat, and scattered here and there were small pieces of charred wood and animal bone. Some of these bones were split lengthwise, probably to extract the marrow. The implements seemed to have been placed near the north side of the cut. A single jaw, with a few teeth attached, was exhumed three feet below the surface, and was the only evidence of human remains. Unlike the preceding mound, fragments of pottery were numerous.

STONE MOUNDS

Comparatively few stone mounds are found within the County limits, and these seem to have been built only on account of that material being more abundant and easier procured than any other.

In a cultivated field, eight miles south-east of Newark, on the Old National Road, a few scattered pieces of sandstone mark the spot where the largest stone mound of the County stood. In the construction of the Licking Reservoir, the majority of the stones were utilized in building the north bank. It was one hundred and eighty-three feet in diameter and thirty-five feet high.

Six miles north of Newark, located on the point of the highest hill in that vicinity, is a mound, forty-five feet in diameter, built entirely of sandstone slabs gathered from the surface of the hill. A small excavation near the center revealed two rather roughly chipped arrowheads, four large flint flakes, small pieces of a human skull, and charred fragments of bone.

One and one-half miles north of Linnville, in sight of two large earthen mounds, is a well



Stone Mound north of Linnville

preserved stone mound built of large sandstone boulders. It was originally not less than fourteen feet high and one hundred feet in diameter.

One and one-half miles south-east of Linnville and one-half mile south of the National Road, on the farm of Mr. Anthony Parr, is a group of exceedingly interesting mounds. No. 1 is one hundred and twenty feet in diameter and fourteen feet high; fifteen feet south-west of this is a stone mound, eighty feet in circumference and eight feet high; east of this is another of earth, one hundred feet in diameter, and surrounded by a circular embankment two feet high.

The only stone fort in the County lies eight miles south-east of Newark, on Flint Ridge. It is a trapezoid in shape, the longest side being six hundred and seven feet and the shortest four hundred and twenty-two. Present height varies from one to two feet. It is composed of flint blocks gathered from the ridge.

EFFIGY MOUNDS

Of the few effigy mounds to be found in Ohio, two of these interesting works are located in the Licking Valley. Occupying the summit of one of the most prominent hills, on the old Rose farm, commanding a view for miles down the valley, is

the Alligator Mound, second in importance only to the Serpent of Adams County. The name is somewhat misleading, however, and is called by some the Opossum, an animal better known to the Aborigines than the Alligator. The total length of the body is about two hundred and fifty feet, with the legs thirty-six. The tail terminates in a number of coils. To the north is a pile of burned stones, connected by a graded way ten feet wide.

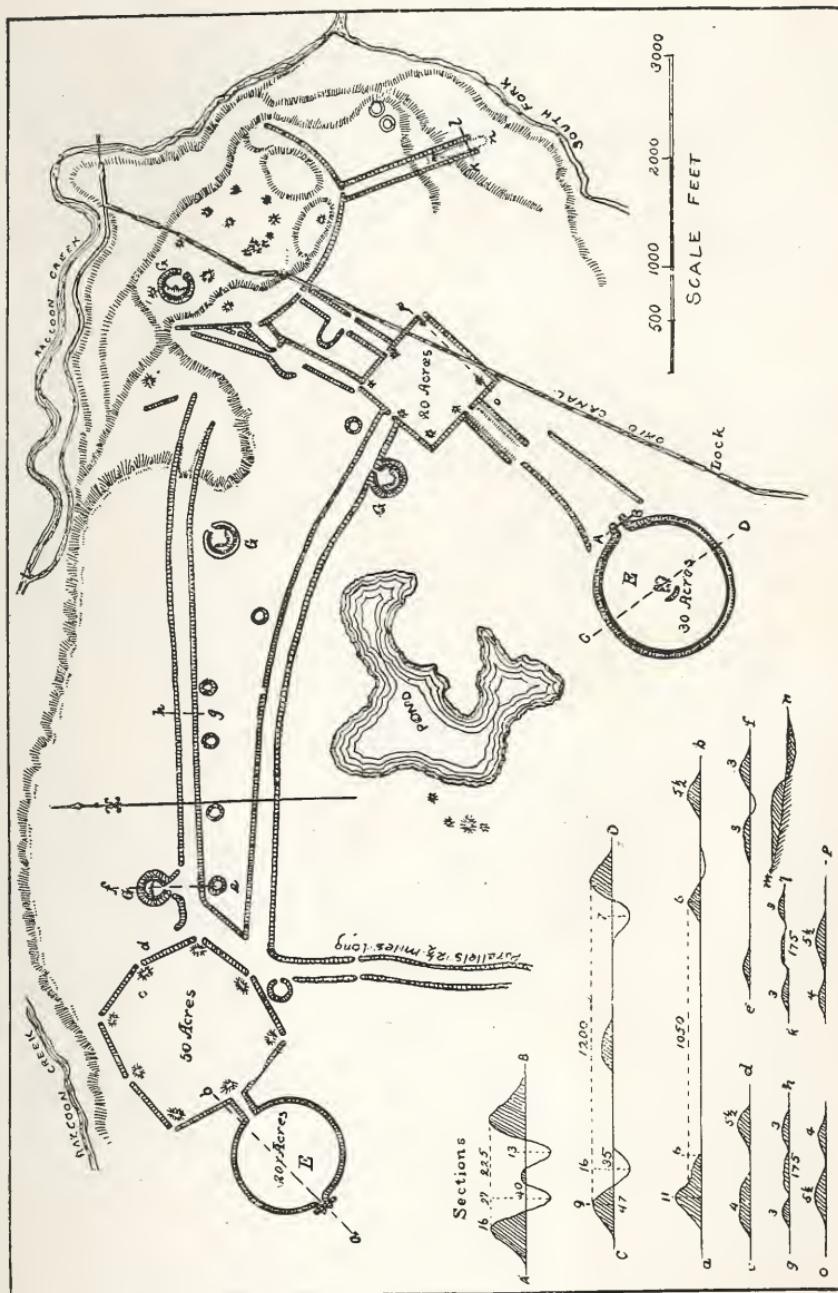
By cultivation, stamping of stock and continued weathering, this most interesting mound has suffered the same fate as many other works, and only a few years will have elapsed before the Alligator will be totally obliterated. It seems as though this rare antiquity above all others of the county, should be deserving of a little attention, but the Serpent would have been allowed to go to ruin, had it not been preserved by a people living in a section where the prehistoric race had left no such wonders.

Within the circle at the Fair Grounds, one and one-half miles southwest of Newark, is a group of four mounds which appear to some to resemble an eagle with outstretched wings, the head pointing directly to the gateway. Though it is difficult to recognize this group as the effigy of an eagle, it was probably intended for some such image.

THE NEWARK GROUP

The most extensive and intricate group of all prehistoric earthworks, consisting of parallels, squares, circles and octagons, occupies a plane of four square miles between the South Fork of the Licking River and the Raccoon Creek, forty feet above these streams. As one passes over this plane, constantly finding some evidence of the Mound Builders, who under such trying circumstances constructed these magnificent works, he wonders if this was not the rendezvous of the inhabitants for miles around.

The Old Fort, nearly a mile in circumference, is the most prominent of the group. It is not a true circle, the respective diameters being



Newark Works. Circle E contains 19 Acres and the Octagon 38½ Acres

eleven hundred and fifty and twelve hundred and fifty feet, with a height of fourteen feet at the highest point. A ditch surrounds the embankment, varying in depth from four to thirteen feet. Opening to the south is a gateway seventy-five feet wide. Here the embankment reaches the maximum height, and the ditch the maximum depth. The land on which the Old Fort stands

was purchased by The Licking County Agricultural Society, and for years has furnished a suitable place for the annual Licking County Fairs.

A short distance from the Old Fort in a southwestern direction is the Octagon Fort and Circle. The Circle, twenty hundred and eighty feet in circumference and six feet in height, is connected with the Octagon, which encloses an area of thirty-eight and one-half acres, by a graded way. The sides of the Octagon do not intersect, but leave an opening, back of which is a mound five feet high and eighty by one hundred feet at



Graded Way Connecting the Octagon Fort with the Circle at Encampment Ground

the base. It appears that the builders originally intended to continue the system westward from the Circle by constructing parallels nearly two miles long, but abandoned that idea and completed the work by constructing a mound one hundred and seventy feet long and eight feet higher than the wall of the Circle. Graded ways formerly connected these works with those at the Fair Grounds, but only traces of them now remain. The State purchased the land on which these earthworks are situated, and restored them to what was supposed to have been their original height. Since that time it has been used as the State Encampment Ground, for which use it is admirably adapted. During the past summer, as high as thirty-five hundred soldiers were



accommodated at one time. The tents within the circular enclosure and the mounted guns placed on several points of the embankment present a truly impressive appearance.

HILL TOP ENCLOSURES

There is a class of earthworks designated as hill-top enclosures, which, wherever found, have the same general characteristics in common.



Camp McKinley

[Photo by Hemsted]

Invariably situated on some prominent hill-top, they conform closely to the shape of the hill and vary greatly in size. Owing to their location, they have been better preserved from the destructive agencies than have the works of the valleys, though in spite of this fact, few now remain entirely as when first found. The largest and best preserved hill-top fort lies a short distance north-east of Granville, in the Welsh Hills. It is constructed in such a way that all parts of the embankment can be seen from the elevation within, and encloses an area of about fifty acres. Two small mounds and two circular enclosures, not over a hundred feet in diameter, were within the large fort, but are now obliterated. The walls, nowhere exceeding eight feet in height, were thrown up from without, leaving an external ditch.

Directly south of the Old Fort, on a hill-top south of the Licking River, is a semi-circular fort with an external ditch, and eight miles south-east of Newark a portion yet remains of a fort which surrounded the large stone mound. Half a dozen such enclosures, some of considerable size, are situated within a few miles of Newark.

Six and one-half miles south-east of Newark, on the farms of Messrs. Thomas Moore and P. F.

Coulter, is an earthen fort, oval in form, with an external ditch. A single gateway opens to the south, with a width of eighty-nine feet. The height on the inside varies from one to two feet, and on the outside to the bottom of the ditch, from three to five. The entire circuit of the wall measures twenty-one hundred and seventy-six feet, the greatest width six hundred and seventy-five feet and greatest length seven hundred and eighty-five feet. A stone mound and two large earthen mounds are plainly visible from this fort.

Five and one-half miles northeast of Newark near Brushey Fork, on the farm of Samuel Williams, on the crest of a high hill, is a fort about two feet high, having an external ditch eighteen inches deep. The diameter from east to west is three hundred and sixty-three feet, from north to south two hundred and forty-seven feet.

One striking feature of the works between Newark and Granville, as a whole, is their apparent grouping. The Newark group would



Hill Top Fort in Welsh Hills, Northeast of Granville

suggest a single settlement, while traversing the Raccoon Valley, we find a number of other works constituting what seems to be another distinct group, belonging to another settlement, including the Alligator or Opossum Mound, the fortified hill, a circular enclosure in the valley comprising about sixty acres, and an increased number of burial mounds.

FLINT RIDGE

Scarcely a field is ploughed without bringing to light some stone piece showing human workmanship, whether it be a mere flint chip or a finely wrought slate ornament. Licking County has long been noted for its richness in surface finds, especially of flint implements, which have been found in countless numbers. It is not always an easy task to find out in just what locality the Aborigines secured this or that material. But not so with the flint; that is a product of Licking and other adjoining counties, found in a stratified deposit unequaled the country over as a prehistoric quarry. Equally distant from Zanesville and Newark, is a range of hills eight miles long and two miles wide, known as Flint Ridge, literally honeycombed in places with pits dug from the surface to the main flint strata. It has been estimated that there were approximately eleven hundred of these pits, the largest, over a hundred feet in diameter, is situated near the Ridge cross roads.

Huge pieces of flint crop out on several points of the hillsides, but aboriginal man was not long in finding out that the weathered material was unfit for the manufacture of the finest implements, hence these pits were dug to reach the main bed. Just what means were employed in breaking the flint after reaching it is unknown.

One feasible method that receives general approval is that of building a fire on a layer of clay covering the main strata, and later throwing cold water on the heated stone. This would cause the flint to shatter, and would then be in a form easily broken by stone hammers. The pieces thus procured were taken to the blocking-out shops, where the superfluous edges were chipped off. Oftentimes the flint was carried from the Ridge in these rude forms called turtle backs, without further chipping, while in other cases they were made into arrow-heads or drills at the finishing shops on the Ridge.

Theory after theory has been put forth with a view of solving some of the mysteries of the Mound Builders, but as to who they were and whence they came we are yet in the dark. By systematic and scientific investigation we are gradually learning more and more of their habits and customs, yet their history is a broken chain, with only a link here and there to give us some clue for speculation.

